

Classification of Substances in *Vaidyanighaṅṭus*– Medical Lexicons

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Abstract

Qualities and effects of substances are described in all Ayurvedic works. The classics describe the substances of food and drink in separate group for each type like milk, ghee, oils etc. and medicinal substances in one group. Later medicinal substances were dealt with in more than one group increasing from seven to twenty four. In late medieval period the number of groups as well as of substances further increased with separate groups for articles used in food and drink like different vegetables, cereals, pulses, grains as well as different types of prepared foods. The number of groups from about ten increased to more than fifty covering each and every item used in food, drink and regimen indicating the importance of each and every substance in maintaining health and preventing and curing diseases.

Key words: *Dravyamuktāvalī, Dravyaratnākara, Dravyaratnāvalī*

1. INTRODUCTION

It is well-known that ancient people of India were living very close to the nature and were keen observers of nature including animal and vegetable kingdom. The substances were classified into three categories, *jaṅgama*, *audbhida* and *pārthiva*-animal and vegetable kingdoms and minerals. Vegetable kingdom was again classified into four *vanaspati*, *vīrudh*, *vānaspatya* and *oṣadhi*. *Caraka Saṃhitā* mentions the following parts/products of plants indicating the keen observation: *mūla* (root), *tvak* (bark), *sāra* (pith), *niryāsa* (gum or resin), *nāla* (stalk), *svarasa* (sap) *pallava* (very tender leaves), *kṣāra* (alkali), *kṣīra* (milky juice/sap), *phala* (fruit), *puṣpa* (flower), *bhasma* (ash), *taila* (oil), *kaṇṭaka* (thorn), *patra* (leaf) *śuṅga* (awn or prop roots), *kanda* (tuber) and *praroḥa* (germinating parts). Use of different parts for different effects was noticed.

Apart from the natural substances, different aspects of preparation of different articles

of food and drink were also observed for their effects on health and disease. The changes in the effects by different methods were studied and were classified into seven. They are *svabhāva* (nature), *saṃyoga* (combination), *saṃskāra* (processing), *mātrā* (quantity), *deśa* (place or region), *kāla* (time) and *upayogavyavastha* (mode of administration). All these are well explained in Ayurvedic classics.

2. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBSTANCES FROM SAṂHITĀS

The classification of substances shows the development in the knowledge as well as analytical approach. The classification of different substances including medicinal substances in classics-*Saṃhitās* is as below.

2.1 *Caraka Saṃhitā* - 12 groups

1. *Śūka* -awned grain, 2. *Śamī*-pulses/legumes, 3. *Māṃsa*-meat, 4. *Śāka*-vegetables, 5. *Phala*-fruit, 6. *Haritaka*-substances used in food

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preparations without cooking like ginger, 7. *Madya*-intoxicating drinks, 8. *Jala*-water, 9. *Gorasa*-milk and milk products, 10. *Ikṣu*-sugarcane, 11. *Kṛtānna*-prepared foods, and 12. *Āhārayogi*-combinations of food.

2.2 *Suśruta Saṃhitā* - 19 groups

1. *Pānīya*-water, 2. *Kṣīra*-milk, 3. *Dadhi*-curd, 4. *Takra*-butter milk, 5. *Ghṛta*-ghee, 6. *Taila*-oil, 7. *Madhu*-honey, 8. *Ikṣu*-sugarcane, 9. *Madya*-intoxicating drinks, 10. *Mūtra*-urine, 11. *Śāli*-paddy and such grains, 12. *Māṃsa*-meat, 13. *Phala*-fruit, 14. *Śāka*-vegetables, 15. *Puṣpa*-flowers, 16. *Lavaṇa*-salt, 17. *Kṛtānna*-prepared dishes, 18. *Bhakṣya*- special preparations like *laḍḍus*, and 19. *Anupāna*-accessory liquids taken after taking food.

2.3 *Aṣṭāṅgasāṅgraha* - 11 groups

1. *Jala*-water, 2. *Kṣīra*-milk, 3. *Taila*-oil, 4. *Mūtra*-urine, 5. *Śūka*-awned, 6. *Śimbi*-pulses, 7. *Kṛtānna*-prepared dishes, 8. *Māṃsa*-meat, 9. *Śāka*-vegetables, 10. *Phala*-fruit, 11. *Mātrādi*-dose

2.4 *Aṣṭāṅgahr̥daya* - 11 groups

1. *Toya*-water, 2. *Kṣīra*-milk, 3. *Ikṣu*-sugarcane, 4. *Madya*-wine, 5. *Śūka*-awned grain, 6. *Śimbi*-pulses, 7. *Kṛtānna*- prepared dishes, 8. *Māṃsa*-meat, 9. *Śāka*-vegetables, 10. *Phala*-fruit, 11. *Ausadha*-medicinal

In *saṃhitās* (classics) the substances used as medicines are all dealt with in one group, while foods and drinks are grouped separately as water, milk, butter etc. Later works of medieval period have more than one group for medicinal substances. Thus the number of groups in *dravyaguṇa* gradually increased.

3. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBSTANCES FROM MEDIEVAL NIGHAṆṬUS

The number of groups in some *nighaṇṭus* of medieval age is given below:

3.1 *Dhanvantarinighaṇṭu* - 7 groups

3.2 *Cūḍāmaṇinighaṇṭu* (unpublished) – 7 groups

These two books deal with the medicinal substances in seven groups.

1. *Guḍūcyādi*, 2. *Śatapušpādi*, 3. *Candanādi*, 4. *Karvīrādi*, 5. *Kāñcanādi*, 6. *Āmrādi*, 7. *Miśrakādi*

3.3 *Śabdacandrikā* – 8 groups

1. *Vṛkṣādi*, 2. *Svarṇādi*, 3. *Ghṛtādi*, 4. *Bhūmyādi*, 5. *Manuṣyādi*, 6. *Siṃhādi*, 7. *Madyādi*, 8. *Pañcakaṣāyādi*

3.4 *Nighaṇṭuśeṣa* – 6 groups

1. *Vṛkṣa*-tree, 2. *Gulma*-shrubs, 3. *Lata*-creeper, 4. *Śāka*-vegetables, 5. *Tṛṇa*-grass, 6. *Dhānya*-paddy and other grains.

3.5 *Dravyaguṇaśataśloki* - 4 groups

3.6 *Madanapāla*-13 groups

1. *Abhayādi/harītakyādi*, 2. *Śuṅṭhyādi*, 3. *Karpūrādi*, 4. *Suvarṇādi*, 5. *Vaṭādi*, 6. *Phala*-fruit, 7. *Śāka*-vegetables, 8. *Pānīyādi*-water and drinks, 9. *Ikṣukādi*-sugarcane, 10. *Dhānya*-grains, 11. *Dhānyakṛtānnādi*-food prepared from rice and other such grains, 12. *Māṃsa*-meat, 13. *Miśraka*-miscellaneous.

3.7 *Bhāvaprakāśanighaṇṭu* – 23 groups

1. *Harītakyādi*, 2. *Karpūrādi*, 3. *Guḍūcyādi*, 4. *Puṣpa* - flower, 5. *Vaṭādi*, 6. *Āmrādi*, 7. *Dhātvādi*, 8. *Dhānya*, 9. *Śāka* - vegetables, 10. *Māṃsa* - meat, 11. *Kṛtānna*-prepared dishes, 12. *Vāri*-water, 13. *Dugdha*-milk, 14. *Dadhi*-curd, 15. *Takra*-buttermilk, 16. *Navanīta*-butter, 17. *Ghṛta*-ghee, 18. *Mūtra*-urine, 19. *Taila*-oil, 20. *Sandhāna*, 21. *Madhu*-honey, 22. *Ikṣu*-sugarcane, 23. *Anekārtha* – words having more than one meaning.

This may suggest that in ancient period more stress was given on substances of food and

drinks than medicinal substances in maintaining the health and prevention and cure of diseases, which are the goals of Ayurvedic science. Gradually the stress on the medicinal substances increased, resulting in the increase of number of groups of medicinal substances. Though the medicinal substances are described in only one group in classics, it is to be noted that in *Caraka Saṃhitā* one chapter enumerates the drugs in fifty groups according to their function. This is very elaborate and left no scope for further grouping or additions on the basis of function.

The classification of groups of medicinal substances into more than one group appears to have started with *Dhanvantarinighaṇṭu*, which has seven groups. *Cūḍāmaṇinighaṇṭu* of 17th c. also followed this. The basis of this division is not known. Acharya Bapalalji Vaidya stated that this division is not scientific. He states thus in the introduction to *Nighaṇṭuśeṣa*.

“Most of the *nighaṇṭus* give the groups like *harītakṛyādi*, *guḍūcyādi*, *āmrādi* etc. But this classification has no scientific basis. The classification done by *Caraka* and *Suśruta* is according to principles of common function. The classes like *ūrdhvaabhāgahara*, *śirovirecana* are formed on the basis of common function.” He even states that ‘*daśemāni*’ of *Caraka Saṃhitā* is very important but was left over by Vāgbhaṭa. He further states “Acharya Hemaçandra (of *Nighaṇṭuśeṣa*) has not accepted the classification of his predecessors. He has divided his *Nighaṇṭu* into six *kāṇḍas* viz; *vṛkṣa*, *gulma*, *latā*, *śāka*, *tṛṇa* and *dhānya*. This is the special feature of this *Nighaṇṭu* and this is not found in any other *Nighaṇṭu*.” However Dr. J.L.N. Sastry has tried to justify this division to some extent, though not very satisfactory. “1. *Guḍūcyādi*- plants combating different diseases e.g. *guḍūci*, *śāṭhi*, *śāliparṇi*, *jīvaka* etc. 2. *Śatapušpādi*- herbs used as stomachic, digestive etc. e.g. *śatapušpa*, *miṣṛeya*, *ela*, *nāgakeśara* etc. 3. *Candanādi*-plants with volatile oils, flavonoids and minerals e.g. *candana*,

manaḥśīla, *tuttha* etc. 4. *Karavīrādi*- herbs used in skin, *kṛmi*, *viṣa* and haemorrhage e.g. *karavīra*, *rasona*, *sinduvāra*, *akṣa* 5. *Kāñcanādi*- both mineral, herbal and animal sources which are used for different diseases are described under this e.g. Gold, Tin, Mercury, *masūra*, *godhūma* etc. 6. *Āmrādi*- plants used for their fruits, flowers, creepers and barks (some aromatic plants are also present) e.g. *āmra*, *bhavya*, *kadamba*, *arjuna*, *jātī* etc. 7. *Miśrakādi*-drugs with miscellaneous properties e.g. *auśadhigaṇa* and *viṣagaṇa*.

Dr. Sastry has also tried to explain the basis for the twenty seven divisions of *Sodhalanighaṇṭu* and the ten divisions of *Rājanighaṇṭu* also.

4. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBSTANCES FROM LATE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

During late medieval period many *vaidyanighaṇṭus* were compiled as evident from the survey of the medical manuscripts in different repositories. It shows that the practitioners were very thorough with the qualities and effects of all substances and *vaidyanighaṇṭus* were very popular. Not only the number of groups increased but the number of substances and their varieties also increased. These were so popular that the colophons in one work mention the name of some other work. One or two colophons in *Dravyaratnākara* and *Dravyamuktāvali* mention the name of the book as *Dravyaratnāvalī*. Though several *vaidyanighaṇṭus* were compiled with some common or identical topics each one has some significance.

The study of following three manuscripts reveals some interesting features in classification: 1. *Dravyaratnāvali*, 2. *Dravyamuktāvalī*, 3. *Dravyaratnākara* or *Guṇapāṭha*. *Dakṣiṇāmūrtinighaṇṭu*, *Dravyagaṇāvalī*, *Dravyagaṇaratnāvalī* have also been looked into cursorily. Among these the first *Dravyaratnāvalī* is published in Telugu script with Telugu translation. Only the first chapter out of five chapters of

Dakṣiṇāmūrtinighaṇṭu was also published in Telugu script. Others are palm leaf manuscripts. The study of the above manuscripts indicates that these are all compilations.

Dravyaratnāvalī deals with all the substances in fifty five groups. The number of substances in each group is also more than any known *nighaṇṭu*. It has also specified groups for similar type of substances. It deals with considerable number of substances in all groups including the herbs and drugs. *Dakṣiṇāmūrtinighaṇṭu* gives only the synonyms. *Dravyaratnākara* has limited number of groups and substances limiting only to more popularly used things.

Classification of liquid articles of diet, food and drinks is almost same in all *nighaṇṭus* including the *dravyagūṇa* part of classics and other major works. They are water, milk, honey, alcoholic drinks and others. But the twofold classification of oils is unique in *Dravyaratnāvalī*. They are *drumasāra* and *bījasāra* groups. Oil obtained from the seeds is *bījasāra* while *drumasāra* is that obtained from parts other than seeds.

Water is classified differently in some *vaidyanighaṇṭus*. Caraka *Samhitā* states that water is only of one kind, which falls from atmosphere –rain-but it changes into different types by its contact with the particular region and season while falling or after falling. *Dravyamuktāvalī* mentions eight types of water.

*Kaupam sārāsa tāṭākam śauṇḍam -
prasravaṇodbhavam*

*Vāpī-nadī-toyamititapuna-
śrutamaṣṭadhā.*

These types are separately described but the number of types described is more than eight including water of hailstones, coconut and such others. If types like coconut-water and others are not considered and only water as understood normally is taken, even then the number does not

tally. The types of normally understood water mentioned are as below in this work:

Water of 1. well with saline water, 2. well with sweet (drinking) water, 3. lake, 4. tank, 5. pond, 6. *parvatoparigata*- water on mountains or stream, 7. *cūlī*, 8. *vāpī*- well with steps to go down, 9. *nadī*-river and 10. *palvala*- puddle.

The first two come under *kaupa*, the first in the verse. *Prasravaṇodaka* can be *parvatoparigata*. *Cūlī* is not clear. It appears that some interpolations have taken place. *Palvala* also appears a repetition but *vāpī*, *śauṇḍa*, *kūpa*, *taṭāka*, *sārāsa* and *palvala* can be taken as sources of water with different capacity. Thirty two types of water are described in the group of water. In *Dravyaratnāvalī* seventy items including that of many rivers are described. *Dravyamuktāvalī* has the water of only one river Tuṅgabhadra, which may be near the place of the author. *Dravyaratnākara* classifies water into three types-*vṛṣṭi* (rain), *bhauma* (ground) and *phala* (fruit-water like coconut water etc.).

Madanapālanighaṇṭu mentions four types of water. *Divya*- divine or water collected directly from rain or atmosphere, *tuṣāraja*-obtained from mist, *dhāra*-collected from rain and *karihaima*-obtained from snow, glaciers and such others. *Dhāra* may also be rain water collected from roofs and such other sources. Though these are classified as above, water of all types and of all sources like rivers, tanks, ponds and lakes is explained. In *Caraka Samhitā*, group of water is the eighth among the twelve groups. *Madanapālanighaṇṭu* and *Bhāvaprakāśanighaṇṭu* also placed the group of water in the middle of the groups.

The *nighaṇṭus* of late medieval period devoted major part to the substances which are used as food and drink. It may be due to the increase of the number of items used and also of the methods of preparations during the passage of several centuries. Grains described under one group were later divided into *śūka*, *śimbi*, *trṇa*,

sāli and *vrīhi*. It is interesting that *Nighaṅṭuśeṣa* has separate groups as *tr̥na* and *dhānya*. Besides a separate group *dhānyakṛtānnādi* is added in *Madanapāla* including all types of cooked and processed grains, like cereals and pulses. *Dravyaratnāvalī* deals the cooked and processed foods in the following groups apart from *śimbi* and *tr̥na-peyādi*, *odana*, *sūpa* and *kṛtānnāpūpa*. *Peyādi* as a separate group is included in *Dravyaratnāvalī* and *Dravyamuktāvalī*. *Dravyaratnāvalī* has, apart from *śimbidhānya* group, another group as *sūpavarga* dealing with the processed preparations of pulses.

Harita group in *Dravyaratnāvalī* and *Dravyamuktāvalī* deals with preparations of accessory dishes for staple food, now called as *caṭni* in Hindi and some other regional languages. This *caṭni* is called *paccādi* in Telugu and *Dravyamuktāvalī* calls the group by Telugu name *paccādi*. This word is even used in Sanskrit verse while enumerating the groups as “*paccādiśuṣkameva ca*”. *Haritaka* group in *Caraka Saṃhitā* is different dealing with substances which are used uncooked like ginger.

Vegetables also gained importance as seen from the increase of groups to more than one group of early period. *Dravyamuktāvalī* has separate groups as *sāka*, *puṣpaśāka*, *phalaśāka*, *kandaśāka* and *śuṣkaśāka*, which are leaves, flowers, fruit, tubers and dried vegetables respectively. The leafy or fruit vegetables were collected and cut and dried after mixing little salt. These dried vegetables are called *varugu* in Telugu and they are used to prepare curries, *caṭnis* and others. In addition to the above *Dravyaratnāvalī* has groups for stalks and pith-*nāla* and *majja*. *Dravyaratnākara* grouped the vegetables on the basis of the place from where they are obtained. This appears to be unique in this work. They are *ārāmajātā*, *kṣetrajāta*, *jalādhārajāta*, and *kṛṣisthānajāta*. These may be vegetables grown in park-like fields, paddy fields, irrigated fields and ploughed and cultivated fields.

Fruits were also very commonly eaten and they also find considerable place in *nighaṅṭus*. *Dravyamuktāvalī* has only one group for fruits apart from those which are used as vegetables. *Dravyaratnāvalī* divides the fruits into groups *āma*, *apakva*, *pakva* and *śuṣka* meaning very tender, unripe, ripe and dried fruits respectively. These groups are separate from the fruits used as vegetables-*phalaśāka*. *Dravyaratnākara* grouped the fruits just like the vegetables on the basis of their availability. They are *vanajāta*, *ārāmajāta*, *araṇyajāta*, *kṣetrajāta*, *grāmajāta*, *mahāvanajāta* and *madhyavanajāta*. These may be small forests, raised gardens, ordinary forests, fields, villages, very big and medium forests. *Dravyaratnākara* has an additional group for seeds-*bījavarga*.

Meat is dealt with in three groups in all works- *mṛga*, *vihāṅga* and *matsya* meaning animals, birds and fish. Animals are classified as *mahāmṛga*, *mṛga*, *prasaha*, *bileśaya*, *viṣkīra*, *pratuda*, *apcara* and *matsya*. Only the number of animals included differs. *Dravyaratnāvalī* has more number of animals, birds and fish and aquatic animals.

Dravyaratnāvalī appears to be the most comprehensive among the *nighaṅṭus*. Hence the names of groups and number of items in each group are given below.

1. Water- <i>jala</i>	86
2. Milk- <i>kṣīra</i>	46
3. Curd - <i>dadhi</i>	22
4. Butter milk - <i>takra</i>	34
5. Butter - <i>navanīta</i>	11
6. Ghee - <i>ghṛta</i>	14
7. Sugarcane- <i>ikṣu</i>	22
8. Honey <i>mākṣika</i>	41
9. Oil from seeds- <i>bījasāra taila</i>	26
10. Oil obtained from parts other than seeds - <i>drumasārataila</i>	8
11. Wine- <i>madya</i>	30
12. Urine- <i>mūtra</i>	11
13. Dung - <i>vid</i>	10
14. Grass-grains- <i>tr̥nadhānya</i>	38

15. Pulses- <i>śimbi</i>	45
16. Soups- <i>peyādi</i>	21
17. Food (boiled rice etc)- <i>odana</i>	74
18. Sweet and special dishes- <i>apūpādi</i>	23
19. Cooked pulses- <i>sūpa</i>	28
20. Prepared dishes- <i>kṛtāṇna</i>	33
21. Meat of animals- <i>mṛgamāmsa</i>	48
22. Birds - <i>vihaṅga</i>	58
23. Fishes- aquatic- <i>matsya</i>	62
24. Leaf vegetables- <i>patraśāka</i>	121
25. Sprouts or tender leaves - <i>pallava</i>	13
26. Flowers (used in food) - <i>puṣpa</i>	20
27. Unripe fruit- <i>āmaphala</i>	84
28. Accessory of food with some sour liquid - <i>khala</i>	7
29. Stalks <i>nāla</i>	9
30. Tuber- <i>mūla</i>	28
31. Catnis <i>harita</i>	23
32. Fruits (used as food) <i>śuṣkaphala</i>	10
33. <i>Pāpaḍs</i> etc <i>vaṭakādi</i>	13
34. Marrow of fruits etc- <i>majjā</i>	7
35. Dry fruits- <i>śuṣkaphala</i>	10
36. Flour or cake of sesame etc- <i>tilapiṣṭa</i>	6
37. Fruits <i>dhātri</i> (<i>āmālaki</i>) etc- <i>dhātryādi</i>	36
38. Ripe fruit <i>pakvaphala</i>	90
39. Medicinal - <i>auśadha</i>	279
40. Daily regimen <i>dinacaryā</i>	

It includes collyrium *añjana*; nasal insufflation *nasya*; gargling *gaṇḍuṣa*; inhalation of smoke *dhūmapāna*; exercise and others *vyāyāmādi*; application of oil (to the body) and bath *abhyāṅga*; clothes *vastra*; plates for meals *bhojanapātra*; use of smoke(fumes) *dhūpa*; fans *vyajana*; dwellings *vāsasthāna*; enjoyment of women *strīseva*; mercury etc- *rasādī*; precious stones- *ratna*; betel leaves, nuts etc. *tāmbula*; fragrant substances *sugandhadravya*; unguents *lepāna*; beds *śayya*; wearing flowers and garlands *puṣpadhāraṇa*; ornaments *ābharaṇa*; vehicles *yāna*; miscellaneous *prakīrṇa*.

Note: While editing the manuscript *Dravyaratnāvalī*, I consulted some other manuscripts also. I found that the classification in different works is interesting. Due to some unavoidable circumstances, I could not do full justice to the topic as I planned. I hope to go through and

collate all *nighaṇṭus* and bring out a small monograph on this subject.

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